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SPY RING

The Untold Story of the Walker Case

By Howard Blum

LAST MONDAY, THERE HAD been nothing. But today, when he opened his copy of The Los Angeles Times to the Personal Messages, he found it:

"Rus: Haven't heard from you, still want to meet. Propose meeting in Ensenada, Mexico, a neutral site. If you need travel funds, we'll furnish same at your choice of location in Silicon Valley or anywhere else. Please respond to the above."

RUS — as the Government alleges Jerry A. Whitworth called himself — realized he would have to answer. After all, he had started writing to the Federal Bureau of Investigation months ago, hinting at his secret. He had written that he had betrayed his country. Now he had to decide, he had explained in his last letter, whether to betray his friend. Betrayal, he was learning, is a repetitious profession.

Meanwhile, on that Monday in August 1984, while RUS considered what to do, across the country in Norfolk, Va., the secret was also being threatened.

It was a secret so dangerous that, after it was revealed, three members of a Navy family would be found guilty in what Government officials have called "the most damaging case of espionage in United States history." John A. Walker Jr., 48, pleaded guilty to espionage last October; Arthur J. Walker, 51, his brother, was convicted of stealing classified documents, and Yeoman Michael L. Walker, John's 23-year-old son, also pleaded guilty to espionage.

The Walker convictions have contributed to a wide range of Government counterintelligence initiatives. Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger has ordered that the number of people in the military and the defense industry who have access to secrets — estimated at 4.3 million — be cut by 10 percent. And in 1985 there were more arrests of alleged espionage agents than in any year since the end of World War II.

While the flurry of arrests and statements of official outrage has received national attention, agents of the F.B.I., the Naval Investigative Service (N.I.S.) and the National Security Agency (N.S.A.) have been sifting quietly and independently through the activities of John Walker and others in the Walker spy ring.

"We're still trying to find out just how it was possible that a relatively low-ranking sailor, motivated only by money, was able to run a successful spy ring for nearly two decades,"

Howard Blum, an author and former reporter for The Times, is writing "Family Secrets: The Story of the Walker Spy Case" for Simon & Schuster.

said John C. Wagner, the special agent-in-charge of the Norfolk, Va., F.B.I. office, who supervised the arrest of John Walker. "The Bureau is continuing to interview his friends and associates to learn about this strange and mysterious man. We want to make sure we learn what John Walker knew, how he knew it, and how he got away with it."

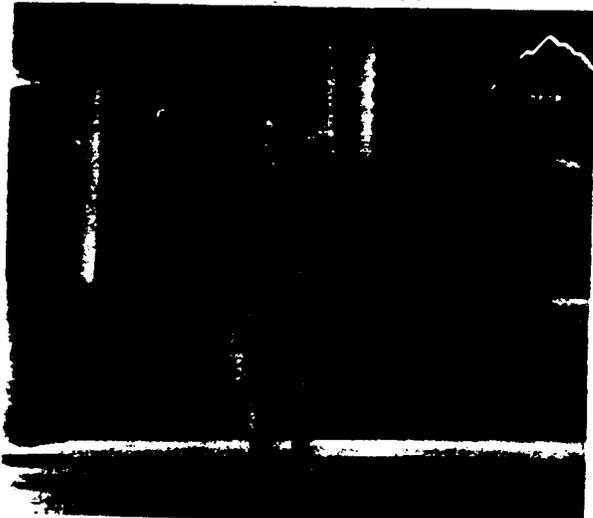
A 10-month investigation by this reporter has also been focusing on John Walker. It included interviews with members of the Walker family, their friends, Federal and military agents and police officials, and an analysis of court records and confidential Government documents. Drawing firm conclusions is difficult because many of the principals have admitted to lying to Federal authorities and — as in the case of John Walker — have been unavailable for interviews. Nevertheless, among the findings are the following:

- Military and Federal agents have been investigating John Walker's possible involvement in two unsolved deaths.
- Federal agents continue to investigate the "strong" possibility that Walker recruited additional spies into his ring. "We're pursuing leads that indicate people were blackmailed into working for Walker," said a Federal agent.
- Walker last fall tried to convince one of his daughters to contact a former associate and offer him \$200,000 to help Walker escape from prison.

Intertwined in these investigations is the espionage trial in San Francisco — closing arguments are scheduled to begin tomorrow — of Jerry Whitworth, the former Navy radioman who insists he is innocent. According to Federal prosecutors, Whitworth was the fourth member of the Walker spy ring, the man who sent "remorseful" letters to the F.B.I. and signed them RUS. He is also the man John Walker often called his best friend.

ON THAT SUMMER day in 1984 when RUS pondered the newspaper message, Barbara Walker was angry. She had come down to Virginia from her apartment in Cape Cod to see her oldest daughter, Margaret, and to have a vacation. But within days, both women remember, things began to gnaw at her. Barbara Walker was 46, twice a grandmother, living in a sandy tourist town in an apartment above the Word Bookstore, clocking in each day for the 6 A.M. shift at the loading dock of the Christmas Tree Shop.

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BRIAN OUGLEY/OUTLINE

Barbara Walker, former wife of John Walker, in Cape Cod. In the minutes before midnight the week before her 47th birthday, she picked up the phone and shared her family's secret with the F.B.I.: John Walker had been directing a Russian spy ring for 17 years.

While John, her former husband, still had the big red brick ranch house in Norfolk, their old house, except now he was sharing it with a blonde younger than Margaret. Or he might be off in his plane, or on his houseboat, or sitting behind a desk at his detective agency, Confidential Reports Inc.

Proximity to John seemed to demand recriminations. Barbara Walker would look back at her visit with Margaret and recall days filled with rage and pain and — another companion, she admitted — liquor. There was also the secret. She had been its custodian for nearly two decades. Her only profit, she complained afterward, had been a broken marriage — and guilt. But this Monday, she decided to get her share. She would get John Walker to give her some

money. Or she would tell all she knew.

It was in this mood that she marched into the office of Confidential Reports in Virginia Beach and demanded to see John Walker.

"Let me just check if he's free," Laurie Robinson, Walker's business partner, remembers telling Barbara Walker. That was when, according to Mrs. Robinson, Barbara slapped her. Mrs. Walker says she cannot remember if she did, but she does recall the confrontation with John.

"I want \$10,000," Mrs. Robinson heard her screaming. Laurie Robinson heard her threatening to "tell it all," unless Walker gave her the money.

Walker, a veteran sailor used to heavy weather, gave her emotions room. Then he started talking. "You don't want to do it," Mrs. Robinson remembers him saying. "Too much is at stake for the entire family. You wouldn't do it to your children. Think of your children."

He kept on until Barbara Walker sheathed her threat. Her love for her three daughters and one son was stronger, she would later explain, than her hatred of their father. By the time she left the office, both Walker and she were convinced, they later said, that the secret was invulnerable.

It was shortly after Barbara Walker's weary exit that, across the country, RUS reached the same conclusion. He typed: "I have great difficulty in coming forth, particularly since the chance of my past involvement ever being known is extremely remote, as long as I remain silent." Then he photostated the letter — that would make it harder to trace — and addressed it to the man who had placed the message in that morning's paper: "Agent in Charge, F.B.I."

Yet despite the confidence of John Walker and RUS that day in 1984, there was no escape, only a reprieve. Three months later, in the minutes before midnight the week before her 47th birthday, Barbara Walker picked up the phone and shared her family's secret with the F.B.I.: John Walker had been directing a Russian spy ring for the past 17 years.

IT WAS JUST A STROKE OF luck that he finally got to meet his father, Jerry Whitworth told a Navy friend, Michael O'Connor — "bad luck."

Back in 1956 — the way Whitworth often told it, and his father in a recent interview corroborated it — 17-year-old Jerry joined the Navy to see the world. He wound up stationed as a storekeeper at the Hunter's Point shipyard, but he was in San Francisco so he wasn't complaining. He had made it out of Muldrow, Okla., out of his grandparents' home with the chickens running in the dirt yard and the flat acres of soybeans growing out back, out of Billy Phillips's station where he

pumped gas after school and on weekends, out of a life that was, he complained, "just plain hickey."

Whitworth had this way, many of his acquaintances say, of not simply making friends, but — a loner's art — of making best friends. He confided in them, he needed them and he would let them call the shots. After a few weeks in the Navy, he had a new best buddy, Roger Olson. It didn't take Whitworth long to tell Olson about his childhood: Came from a broken home; Dad picked up and left just after he was born, headed out to California, and Jerry moved in with his grandparents.

The way Whitworth told it made you ache for him, Olson, who is out of the Navy now and living in Papua New Guinea, would later tell his parents. Whitworth later told members of his defense team that Olson had asked him, "Whereabouts in California your old man settled?"

Whitworth wasn't sure. All he remembered was his uncle's saying that Johnie Whitworth had built himself a restaurant, the Blue Moon Cafe, and was running it with his new wife. Couldn't remember the town. Just that it started with an M. Olson was from California, and he wanted to help. He began rattling off names. Modesto. Moorpark. Maxwell. Then he hit it — Mendota. Mendota, Whitworth repeated. That sounded like it. When they called Mendota information, there was a Blue Moon Cafe.

On their first weekend pass, the two sailors, according to statements made by Olson, drove down Highway 99 in Olson's Dodge Charger, following the signs that pointed the way to "Mendota — the Cantaloupe Center of the World."

When they got to the restaurant, it was easy to spot Johnie Whitworth. The man behind the counter was the spitting image of his son — tall, fence-post lean, and with a broad, high, thoughtful brow.

When Jerry Whitworth saw his father, he rushed up to the counter and said, according to Johnie Whitworth, "You don't recognize me, do you?"

The older man was not the sort to play games. He was also busy. "Can't say that I do," he remembers answering, and started for the kitchen.

"Well," Jerry said, "I'm from Muldrow and I'm your son." He was, his father recalled, quite excited.

"How the hell I'm supposed to recognize you?" Johnie Whitworth remembers saying. "You grown some, boy." He was laughing when he said it. But it wasn't the greeting Jerry Whitworth had expected.

Several hours passed before Johnie Whitworth found time to sit down with his son. By then, the father recalled without apology, there didn't seem to be much to say.

On the way back to the base, Whitworth didn't talk much. He did tell Olson, according to Olson's mother, "I guess things never really work out the way you imagine them to." And then, as they pulled into Hunter's Point, he told his friend, "It's good to be home."

WHEN JOHN WALKER TURNED 18, HE, TOO, FOUND a home in the Navy. He didn't have much of a choice.

His was the sort of family, Walker wrote in an autobiographical letter to his daughter Margaret, where there was always too much liquor around and not enough money. When he was 17, a high-school junior in Scranton, Pa., a friend convinced him there was a quick way to do something about that.

On May 27, 1955, the friend, according to Scranton court records, revealed to Walker that he had gotten away with \$577 in a series of burglaries. Would Walker like a piece of such action?

After their third attempt at a robbery, the two were discovered by a policeman. The officer commandeered a passing car and, firing two shots, chased John Walker through the streets of Scranton. Still, Walker made it to the state highway, and got away. For five days.

Walker pleaded guilty and Juvenile Court Judge Otto P. Robinson announced that he would sentence the youth to the State Correctional Institution. But Walker's older brother, Arthur, showed up in court in his Navy uniform and, Arthur has said, convinced the judge to accept an alternative arrangement: John would quit school and join the Navy.

For John Walker, it seemed, here was a lesson that would guide him for the rest of his life: No jam was so tight that you couldn't find a way out of it. All you needed was the angle.

IN THE NAVY, "TAPE APES" ARE USUALLY THE first to know what's going on. These are the men in the radio rooms. The best of them, those on their way to becoming



Carol Ann Molnar: In 1983, her body washed ashore on a beach in Virginia. She had been shot. Garland L. Joyner: His body was found in 1984. Both deaths are under investigation.

chiefs, are the "hot runners." These men are often the only human links in an electronic naval telecommunications system that, having cost hundreds of millions of dollars to design and operate, stretches across the globe.

If the Pentagon wants to send orders to a carrier — which receives about 2,500 messages daily — it is nearly as easy as placing a long-distance call. Messages are "bounced" off one of four orbiting ultra-high frequency naval communications satellites.

The problem is that any ship, enemy or ally, within a satellite's range — or "foot-print" as it's called — can intercept a message sent to a specific ship. Therefore, more than 90 percent of military messages, according to Navy estimates, are sent in code — codes supervised by the hot runners. If an enemy could not only receive but also "read" an opponent's message, it would be like "playing poker and knowing what the other hand is," suggested Vice Adm. Robert C. Kirksey. Government scientists are convinced, however, that United States codes are impossible to crack.

Yet there is one potential weakness in this vast and complex system — the cognizant agent. "We define a cognizant agent," said Earl David Clark Jr., the N.S.A.'s deputy chief of communications security until he retired this year, "as a cleared individual, with all clearances, who for some reason decides to work for a hostile intelligence organization."

John Walker was a hot runner who ran the naval message center at Norfolk. Before leaving the Navy in 1976, he was a chief warrant officer in charge of code security aboard submarines. And he was, until 1965, a cognizant agent. Jerry Whitworth was also a hot runner. He ran the message center in Alameda, Calif., and was in charge of code security at a satellite communications base on Diego Garcia Island in the Indian Ocean as well as on the aircraft carrier Enterprise. He was, the Government is trying to prove in his trial, Walker's partner and, for more than a decade, a cognizant agent.

UNTIL IT CLOSED DOWN A few years ago, Boom Trencher's Flare Path Restaurant in San Diego drew the tape apes from the nearby Naval Training Center. What they liked about Boom's were the jacks along the bar where you could plug in a pair of Bakelite earphones and listen to the tower at Lindbergh Field, the airport across the road. A radioman's sort of place.

There didn't seem to be anything special, then, about John Walker's arranging to meet Whitworth at Boom's on a September afternoon in 1974. Except this time, there was no horsing around with earphones.

Walker was going to make, as he would later describe it at Whitworth's trial, his "sales pitch." But first he told Whitworth that "even discussing" what he was about to reveal was illegal. Would Whitworth take a "blood oath" to keep his secret?

Not that Walker had any doubts. It was one of his conceits that he could read people pretty well. Ever since he had gotten the idea to recruit Whitworth, Walker had been "probing," as he called it.

Walker had been Whitworth's boss in the practical applications laboratory at the training center in California when they had first met in October 1970.

There was, Walker discovered, a gung-ho side to Whitworth. Whitworth would go scuba diving to catch a better look at the whales moving up the California coast and take Piper Cubs up for loops. And, like Walker, he loved to sail. On many weekends, Whitworth would crew for Walker's boat, The Dirty Old Man.

There was also an intellectual side to Whitworth that im-



MARTY KATZ/OUTLINE

love, worshipped him. There have been allegations by Barbara Walker at Whitworth's trial that he was bisexual. And, in a recent interview, Laurie Robinson said Walker told her that not long after he met Whitworth, the two had a "brief fling."

A member of his defense team says, however, Whitworth in private dismissed Barbara Walker's allegations "with a laugh," and adds, "Jerry is a very straight person. He's not the type to be a bisexual or homosexual, so we just haven't asked him about it."

It was because of Walker that Whitworth met his wife. A group of high-school science-fair winners had come to San Diego from across the country, and Walker assigned his friend to help chaperone them. Two of the students would, according to what Whitworth has told his attorneys, continue to exchange letters with him for years; a third student, Brenda Reis, from North Dakota, would marry him when she turned 21, five years later.

So that afternoon in Boom Trencher's, when he asked if Whitworth would take a blood oath, Walker was certain, he said in court, that his friend would do that for him. After Whitworth swore, Walker told him the secret. Sort of.

The way Walker recounts the conversation — and Whitworth has so far refused to comment on Walker's allegations, other than to plead not guilty in court — he told his friend that he had been stealing classified information for years. Walker has testified that he told Whitworth that he sold the information to a "contact" who resold it to an ally, like Israel, or to a defense contractor. At one point, he suggested the buyer was the Mafia.

But, Walker later told Government agents, he never told his best friend that, in 1968, when the bar he and his wife were running in South Carolina had put him in a financial bind, he had driven up to the Soviet Embassy in Washington and, having asked to see the security officer, sold him a top-secret key list for a KL-47 cryptographic machine. And he never told Whitworth that after this first \$1,000 sale he became a Russian spy, making frequent "dead drops" of photos of stolen documents in the woods around Washington, or of having nearly annual "face-to-faces" with his K.G.B. control agent in Vienna or Casablanca.

But Walker testified last month in San Francisco that he did tell Whitworth that he could make between \$2,000 and \$4,000 a month supplying Walker with top-secret coding material and message traffic. Whitworth, Walker said, had only one concern: Did Barbara Walker know what John was up to?

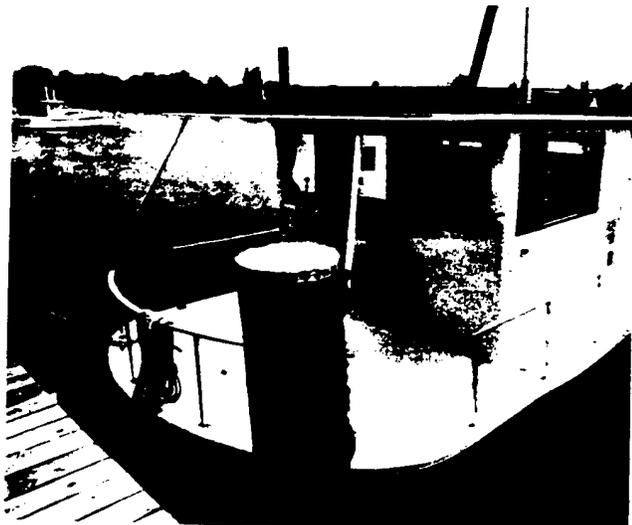
"I assured him," Walker tes-

Laurie Robinson, Walker's ex-partner at Confidential Reports. He asked her to make contact with certain Navy officers.

pressed Walker. Whitworth read Ayn Rand, and this led him, he told friends, into libertarianism. He would attend libertarian meetings, Shary Ratliff, a friend and professor of religion recounted, and people would ask him how he could reconcile the philosophy with the rigid authoritarianism of military life. Whitworth said he simply loved the Navy.

There was another matter: John Walker, as he explained it in numerous interviews with the F.B.I., was convinced that Whitworth, who was always in search of

John Walker's houseboat. While his former wife made do with an apartment in Cape Cod, he shared their big red brick ranch house with a woman and kept a plane as well as the boat in Virginia.



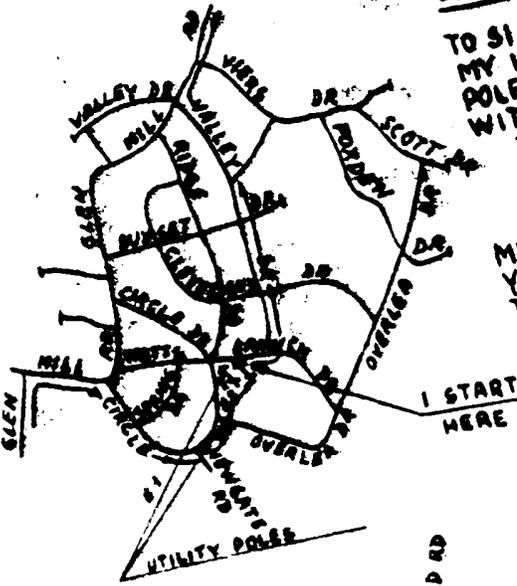
TIM WRIGHT/GAMMA-LIAISON

FOR OUR NEXT EXCHANGE SITES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

TO SIGNAL THAT I AM READY TO EXCHANGE I'LL DROP MY INITIAL CAN OF THE USUAL KIND AT A UTILITY POLE ON WATTS BRANCH DR. WITH CIRCLE DR NEAR ITS INTERSECTION. THE UTILITY POLE IN QUESTION IS THE SECOND ONE TO THE EAST OF THE INTERSECTION (THE FIRST UTILITY POLE IS LOCATED RIGHT AT THE INTERSECTION OF WATTS BRANCH DR AND CIRCLE DR). MY SIGNAL SITE WILL BE ON YOUR RIGHT WHEN YOU DRIVE ON WATTS BRANCH DR FROM CIRCLE DR TOWARD VALLEY DR. I'LL DROP MY SIGNAL ON THE ROAD SHOULDER A FOOT OR TWO FROM THE SURFACE OF THE ROAD. CHECK MY SIGNAL AFTER

8:00 P.M.

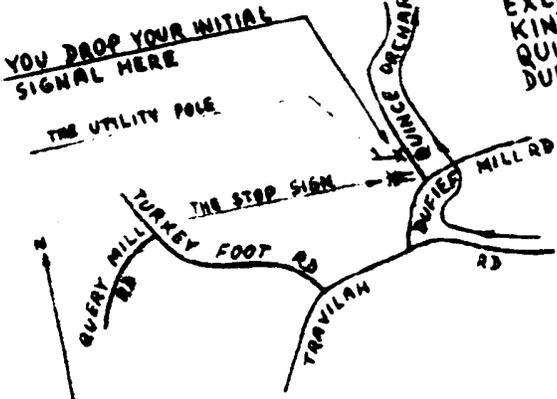
(PHOTO # 1)



TO SIGNAL THAT YOU ARE AVAILABLE FOR OUR EXCHANGE DROP YOUR INITIAL CAN OF THE USUAL KIND AT THE BOTTOM OF A UTILITY POLE ON QUINCE ORCHARD RD AT ITS INTERSECTION WITH DUFIEF MILL RD. THE UTILITY POLE IN QUESTION WILL BE ON YOUR LEFT WHEN YOU DRIVE ON QUINCE ORCHARD RD FROM DUFIEF MILL RD TOWARD DARNESTOWN RD (28). IT IS THE FIRST UTILITY POLE FROM THE INTERSECTION ON THAT SIDE OF QUINCE ORCHARD RD. I'LL CHECK YOUR SIGNAL AFTER

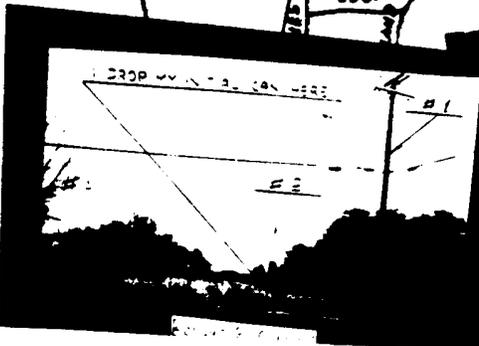
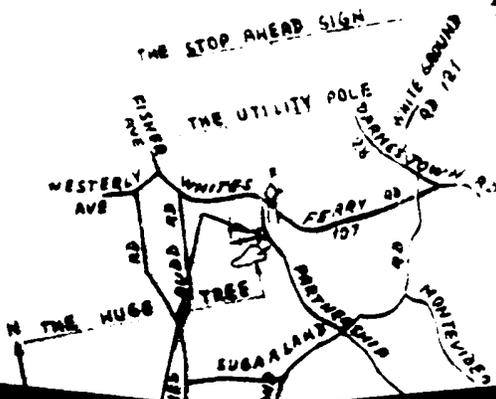
9:30 P.M.

(PHOTOS # 2,2A)



DROP YOUR DELIVERY BEHIND A UTILITY POLE ON PARTNERSHIP RD NEAR ITS INTERSECTION WITH WHITES FERRY RD (107). THE UTILITY POLE IN QUESTION IS LOCATED AT A HUGE TREE ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF PARTNERSHIP RD ABOUT 0.1 MILE FROM THE INTERSECTION OF PARTNERSHIP RD AND WHITES FERRY RD (YOUR DROP POINT WILL BE ON YOUR RIGHT WHEN YOU DRIVE ON PARTNERSHIP RD FROM WHITES FERRY RD TOWARD SUGARLAND RD). BEFORE REACHING YOUR DROP POINT YOU'LL PASS A ROAD SIGN "STOP AHEAD" ON YOUR LEFT. GOING SOUTH YOU'LL SEE THE REVERSE SIDE OF THAT SIGN. THUS YOUR DROP POINT IS LOCATED BETWEEN THE HUGE TREE ON YOUR RIGHT AND THE STOP AHEAD SIGN ON YOUR LEFT.

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tified, "that she would not be a problem." Still, it was not until nine months later, in June 1975, while stationed at Diego Garcia Island as the petty officer in charge of cryptographic equipment, that Whitworth wrote to Walker: "I finally made my first dive. It was real good. My future dives don't look very diverse. Will have to wait and see. Most of these things are so dated." Whitworth was writing to tell his friend and partner, Federal prosecutors charge, that he had finally become a spy.

THIS TIME, JOHN WALKER was prepared. He wore electrically heated socks. And he had his 67-year-old mother waiting in a hotel room.

He wore the socks, he would tell the F.B.I., because, as he had learned on his last winter trip to Vienna, espionage is an outdoor business; one attracts less attention in the street. His control had him walking for hours through the icy nighttime streets and Walker thought he was going to get frostbite.

On Jan. 27, 1979, he had the electric socks. His instructions were precise. A K.G.B. courier had, that fall, left a handwritten page and a set of maps at the

drop site in the Virginia woods. The page, written in block letters, was headed, "The Vienna Procedure."

At 6:15 P.M., a copy of these documents shows, he was to arrive at the Komet Kuchen store on the corner of Schönbrunnerstrasse and Ruckergasse. His recognition signals were in place — the camera bag on his left shoulder, the small paper bag in his right hand. For the next 40 minutes, as the instructions specified, he "drifted slowly" through an intricate route of window shopping.

At 6:55 P.M., he was looking into the window of a men's clothing store on Meidlinger Hauptstrasse. When Walker turned around, his control was standing there. "Hello, old friend," the K.G.B. agent greeted Walker, he would say in an interview with Federal agents nearly seven years later.

The two men walked a bit, and then exchanged camera cases. Inside the case Walker received was approximately \$50,000, according to Federal prosecutors, wrapped in tightly bound packages of \$50 bills. The bag pulled on his shoulder; \$50,000 is a heavy load. But Walker was not too concerned about smuggling the money into the United States. That was why, both he and his brother Arthur independently told the F.B.I., he had brought his mother to Europe. He would make her wear a money belt stuffed with the cash under her sweater. No customs agent would search a nice old lady. (John later denied in open court that he had ever made this admission. His mother has refused to be interviewed.)

It was toward the end of their meeting that Walker brought up something that was troubling him. He told his control — according to a jailhouse conversation with his son, Michael, that is central to ongoing Federal investigations — that he was worried someone had become suspicious of his activities.

THE "BACK BEATERS" NOW HAVE THE CASE. IN RECENT months, conducting interviews from Okinawa to Pennsylvania, agents from the F.B.I., the N.I.S. and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms have been looking into two previously dormant death investigations: the unsolved mur-

der of a sailor who worked at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk by day while, by night, under another name, she was a go-go dancer; and the disputed suicide of a Portsmouth, Va., police detective. "We are convinced that John Walker was involved in both of these deaths," said an N.I.S. agent who refused to be quoted by name.

On the afternoon of Feb. 8, 1983, a friend of Carol Ann Molnar's called the police and reported her missing. She had last been seen at 3 A.M. on Feb. 6 at the Galleon Club in Norfolk, where she was dancing. Her car was found, but Miss Molnar remained missing until May 1. On that morning, her body washed ashore beneath the piers near the Naval Air Station. She had been shot.

The investigation remained in the "unsolved" file. Then, in the months following John Walker's arrest in May 1985, naval investigators found themselves searching for the Molnar file. There were a number of coincidences.

Carol Molnar had been employed at the Armed Forces Staff College, where she had access to classified information. She had worked for more than a year in the same office as one of Walker's steady girlfriends, Patsy G. Marsee. (Miss Marsee, who acknowledged to the F.B.I. that she accompanied Walker in 1977 to Casablanca, where he met with his K.G.B. control agent, has denied any knowledge of Walker's espionage activities. She has not been charged with any crime.)

Another coincidence involved where the body was found. Miss Molnar's body drifted ashore a couple of hundred yards across from where Walker docked his houseboat.

There was also the matter of the bars she danced in — Bob's Runway, the Wayside, the Galleon. These bars, the N.I.S. learned, were Walker's hangouts.

But the investigators got their first real piece of evidence in Okinawa last Christmas, more than a month after John Walker's sentence had been plea-bargained. They were interviewing Daniel Rivas, a sailor who had worked part-time for Walker's Confidential Reports detective agency.

According to Rivas, he was shown a picture of Carol Ann Molnar. He said he told the agents that he had once been with Walker at a hotel bar in northern Virginia when Miss Molnar showed up for "an appointment" with Walker. Rivas said he left the two of them in the bar, "busy talking about something."

The agents, Rivas said in a recent interview, also showed him a black ski mask and asked if he recognized it. Rivas recalled saying, "It's mine. I kept it in the back of Johnny's van. We used it for nighttime surveillance work on divorce cases, things like that."

The ski mask, according to N.I.S. sources, was found in the back seat of Miss Molnar's car after she disappeared.

In a telephone interview from Mississippi, where he is now stationed, Rivas gave additional information: "Johnny Walker had me follow her for a couple of nights down in Virginia Beach. Johnny told me some pimp was after this girl and he had been hired to protect her. So I watched her for a couple of nights and asked around. But I heard and saw nothing. And that was that."

The Joyner case might also have remained dormant if John Walker had not been arrested.



Maps, written directions and photographs, all F.B.I. evidence, give complicated instructions from the K.G.B. to John Walker for a drop of classified documents in Montgomery County, Md.

Continued

The body of William L. Joyner Jr., a 39-year-old police detective, was found on March 18, 1984, police reports state, in Warwick Creek in northeastern North Carolina. His revolver, four rounds missing, was found in the water. According to the medical examiner's report, Joyner, who was right-handed, held the gun backward in his left palm and pulled the trigger with his thumb. The death was officially ruled a suicide.

But the detective's widow, in an effort to have the case reopened, hired Billy A. Franklin, a lawyer and private investigator.

It was a matter of chance that Franklin was asked by the Norfolk Police Department on the day following John Walker's arrest to administer a lie detector test to Pamela K. Carroll, Walker's occasional live-in girlfriend and a policewoman. In the course of that test, Franklin said he fixated on something he found out: P. K. Carroll, along with at least six other police officers, had previously worked for Walker's detective agency. Then he remembered why this information jarred him: a brown Confidential Reports business card had been found on the creek bank across from Joyner's body.

This bit of evidence, slim and circumstantial, was passed on to the intelligence assessment teams. They learned the following: Joyner was also working for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and, at the time of his death, was investigating a gun-smuggling ring. It was near the time of Joyner's death that John Walker approached Rivas, Rivas said recently, with a plan to smuggle \$300,000 worth of Uzi machine guns through Mexico and into Latin America. According to Laurie Robinson, Walker's partner, "Johnny kept a computer file on a cop named Joyner."

Walker's possible involvement in the death of Joyner remains under investigation. A suit by Mrs. Joyner to collect

originally denied because of the suicide ruling — was settled out of court. The insurance company agreed, according to Franklin, to pay \$125,000.

THE CLIENT, AS JOHN Walker explained it to Laurie Robinson shortly after she joined Confidential Reports in January 1981, was offering them a simple but lucrative assignment. All they had to do, Mrs. Robinson recently recounted, was conduct in-depth background checks on various Navy officers. This client, identified by Walker as representing a Midwest construction company, said the officers were being considered for executive positions. Confidential Reports was to determine if they could be trusted.

So Walker, according to Mrs. Robinson, worked out a plan. "First there was the foot-in-door," she said. "I'd go the officers' club and tell the guy Johnny had already singled out that I represented a promotional company. I was giving away a free dinner. All the officer had to do was give me a list, along with the Social Security numbers, of the men under him and I would pick two numbers out of a hat. Ten times out of ten, it worked. I made contact with the subject."

Once Mrs. Robinson made contact, it was up to her to "charm," as she phrased it, the officers.

"I would just hang around the officers' club talking up the guy until he said something like, 'You know, you're an awful nice-looking lady,' and then I knew I was home free." Mrs. Robinson explained. "We'd go out to dinner or for drinks and basically they'd be telling me how wonderful they were and I'd be asking them things about their life and career."

There was another matter her partner instructed her to find out. "John wanted to know if these officers had something to hide, if there was any potential for anyone to blackmail them," she continued. Walker's client wanted men he could trust, she said he told her, not men who had things that could be used against them.

Mrs. Robinson remembers filing "at least 10" background reports on Navy officers for Walker. "I wrote up reports on a commander who bragged he had access to the war room," she recalled. "Then there was one, an officer on a carrier, who told me about how he was cheating on his wife, and if the Navy ever found out, that would ruin his chances for promotion. There was even a lieutenant commander, a guy with fairly high security, who was addicted to gambling — horse racing, Atlantic City, the Bahamas, this guy went where the action was."

Mrs. Robinson's revelations about her background checks have prompted investigators to review two items found in John Walker's home after his arrest. The first was a notebook. The other was a cache of slides and videotapes.

electrical socket in the den (where he had also kept the hand-written drop instructions from the K.G.B., despite the request on many to "Please Destroy"), Walker had written, in an alphabet code, reports on the activities of his ring. According to Federal authorities, K was Arthur Walker, S was Michael Walker and D was Jerry Whitworth. There were also references in the notebook to A. Since his arrest, Walker has told the F.B.I. that A was another symbol for Whitworth; he stated that he used the code letters A and D interchangeably.

"It's possible that A was also Whitworth," said an F.B.I. agent familiar with the case. "But not very likely. Walker was too organized to mix up his codes. I've got to believe, especially in light of what we know about how he ran his detective agency, that there was a fifth man. Someone we haven't caught up with yet."

The search for a fifth man — or woman — has also been encouraged by home movies discovered in Walker's home. "We got pictures of men and women and men and men," said a Federal agent. "Walker was into some strange things, things that could be used to blackmail people into working for him."

"Do we know for sure that there was a fifth member of the ring?" asked a Federal agent. "The answer is no. But after what we learned from Laurie Robinson, we've got to believe Walker was trying to recruit other members. We also know for certain that on at least three occasions he used women to help him make his drops. Were these men or women being blackmailed? There's a lot about Johnny Walker we're still trying to learn."

JOHAN WALKER WAS LYING ON A bed in a Ramada Inn off Route 270 near Rockville, Md., wondering, he would later say, what had gone wrong. Earlier that evening, May 19, 1985, he had left a large brown grocery bag leaning against a utility pole in the woods. Yet when he went to the contact point to look for the package that should have been left for him, nothing was there.

At 3:30 the next morning, F.B.I. agent William Wang, claiming he was the desk clerk, called Walker's room. Someone had smashed into Walker's van. Could he come down to the lobby right away?

John Walker left his room and went to the elevator. As he pressed the button, agents Robert Hunter and James Kolouch, guns drawn, yelled: "Stop! F.B.I."

"You're under arrest," Hunter said, handcuffing him. Kolouch ripped Walker's toupee off his head.

Later that morning, F.B.I. agents went to Arthur Walker's house in Virginia Beach. He was uncooperative. A

few days later, however, saying that he felt "so damn guilty," Arthur Walker — who had left the Navy in 1973 and was working for an engineering and technical concern that did Government work — confessed to espionage.

While F.B.I. agents were interviewing Arthur Walker, Michael Walker was sitting in the master of arms's office on the aircraft carrier Nimitz, anchored off the Israeli coast. N.I.S. agents were searching through his belongings. He waited, busy writing a letter to his wife, Rachel: "At this time I have no idea what has come up, although I would imagine it is pretty serious. . . . If I end this letter on an unhappy note please contact my father as soon as possible." The agents found a box filled with 15 pounds of classified documents hidden behind an air-conditioning unit adjacent to his bunk. The letter, now property of the F.B.I., was never sent.

At about the time of the discovery on the Nimitz, Whitworth, according to court documents, was in Davis, Calif. — where he and his wife had moved after he left the Navy in 1983 — writing a letter on his computer to John Walker. It was a friendly, conversational letter, full of his plans to buy a new house and news of his wife's job prospects. Whitworth was interrupted by a knock on the door. It was two F.B.I. agents. He, too, never got to mail his letter.

ON A SUNDAY NIGHT EARLY last October, Margaret Walker received a call at her home in Norfolk from her father. He was in a Rockville, Md., prison and he wanted her help. His plan, as she remembered it in a recent interview, was simple: she was to cash in all his insurance policies and use the money to bring Dan Rivas, his former employee, back to Virginia from Okinawa. "Tell Dan," his daughter says he told her, "that I am prepared to pay him \$200,000." When Margaret asked her father what he expected Rivas to do for the money, Walker said: "He's going to help me escape. I have a plan."

Walker told his daughter the plan had a code name — the System. If anyone called about the System, she would know what they would be talking about. Later that night, Walker also called Laurie Robinson. He told her about the System and his talk with Margaret. "Time is of the essence, of the essence," he repeated before hanging up. Mrs. Robinson recalled in an interview.

The two women said they agonized over what to do. As they described it, they felt they had been manipulated and lied to for years by John Walker, and now, from prison, he was still attempting to use them. Yet both of them cared about John Walker. Could they betray him?

Walker called Mrs. Robinson back the next Sunday night. She did not contact Rivas — who says he never learned about the plan — but instead gave a tape of the conversation to the F.B.I.

But Walker soon found another "System." On Oct. 28, he struck a deal with the Government: John Walker will serve two life terms and a 10-year term, to run concurrently. Michael Walker will serve two 25-year terms and two 10-year terms, to run concurrently. The father will be eligible for parole in 10 years. The son, in 8 years and 4 months. Two weeks later, in a Norfolk court, Arthur Walker was given three concurrent life sentences.

John Walker's deal, though, had a price. He had to testify against his best friend, Jerry Whitworth.

On April 28, John Walker took the stand in a San Francisco courtroom and announced to the world his claim that he had recruited Whitworth as a spy. As he spoke, he was smiling, as though repressing a secret hilarity. It was as if he were trying to convey one last lesson to his friend: Betrayal is easy, a fact of life. ■